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ENGLISH HOUSE GROUNDS

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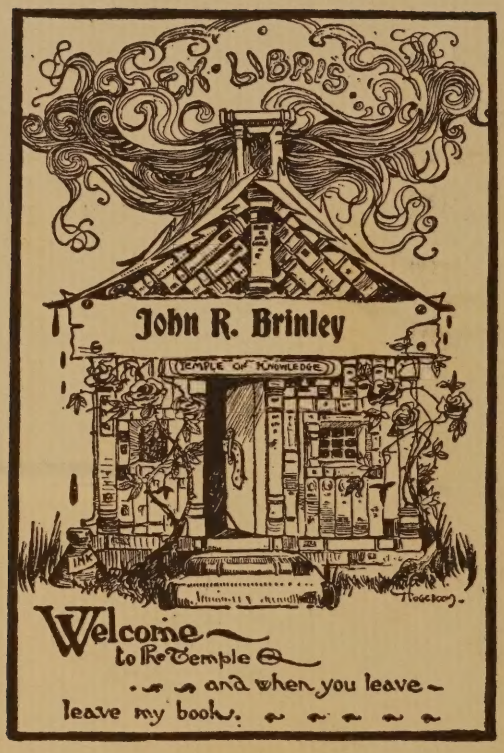
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ENGLISH HOUSE GROUNDS

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ENGLISH HOUSE GROUNDS

PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS
Compiled by
MABEL PARSONS

Text by
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Fellow of American Society of Landscape Architects

EUGENE CLUTE, Editor

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1924

Dedicated
to the Memory of
SAMUEL PARSONS

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT of their courteous cooperation in assembling the material for this work the publisher expresses her deep appreciation of the assistance rendered by the following: Architectural Record; Miss Olivia Bayley; Brackett & Sons; W. N. Brackett; Burton, Knowles & Co.; Mrs. Charlotte Cochrane; Constable & Maude; Ellis, Son & Bowden; Reginald C. S. Evenett; Garrod, Turner & Son; Gudgeon & Sons; Harrods Ltd.; House and Garden, London; Sir Algernon Methuen; Oswald P. Milne, Architect; Capt. Jack de R. Philip; Powell & Co.; H. J. Ronald, Esq.; Mr. and Mrs. Harold A. Sanderson; Chas. Scribner's Sons; J. R. Thornton & Co.; Ward, Price & Co.; Paul Waterhouse, Architect; W. J. H. Whittall, Esq.; and Mr. and Mrs. R. N. Willett.

FOREWORD

The manner in which this book came into being is interesting. It is the story of the bringing forth of a thought under the stimulus of conversation, and of the materialization of the idea after its creator had passed on.

One evening a few years ago Samuel Parsons, whose life work had so great an effect in moulding the art of landscape architecture in our country, and the writer were chatting comfortably at the Century Club with no other thought than to pass a pleasant hour together when the conversation turned to the subject of the valuable inspiration for present day American home owners afforded by the landscape treatment of the grounds about so many of the smaller houses in England. Mr. Parsons spoke regretfully of the fact that this inspiration was not available to many because these charming landscape treatments were seldom published in the magazines and there was no book devoted to them, that in fact about the only place any number of them could be seen was in the diminutive photographs reproduced in the real estate advertisements in Country Life, London.

Then and there the idea was conceived, to collect a large number of photographs of small English house grounds and to publish a careful selection of these views chosen for the value of the suggestions to be found in them. From that point the talk was animated, the plan of publishing such a book rapidly took form. As a result Mr. Parsons and the writer entered into correspondence with a large number of home owners in England and enlisted the aid of a number of real estate agents in the work of locating interesting examples. Owing to the ready and effective co-operation of many of these correspondents a considerable amount of material was soon in hand. Then came Mr. Parsons' death.

For a time nothing more was done, but Mr. Parsons' daughter, who was her father's associate in practice, was acquainted with his plan for the book and knew well his deep interest in it. Somewhat more than a year ago she took up the work of preparing the book where her father laid it down. In collaboration with Mr. Clarence Fowler who, through long and intimate friendship with her father and through his own attainments as a landscape architect, was well fitted to carry out the idea, and with the writer to look after the editorial preparation of the work, the book was brought to completion.

EUGENE CLUTE.

ENGLISH HOUSE GROUNDS

SAMUEL PARSONS, who conceived the idea of this volume, felt that the illustrations in the books on English landscape design had been selected from too elaborate examples to be of use to the average person who contemplates building a small country home; and it was his intention to select photographs from the smaller places that in their general plan would contain features that might be incorporated in the grounds surrounding the medial American house. He realized that few of the examples would be faultless in all their details, but would illustrate some particular point in garden design that during his experience as a landscape architect he had found applicable to owners of small grounds, and on which he wished to lay emphasis.

The editors have had this point constantly in mind when selecting the following illustrations and have made use of the voluminous notes which Mr. Parsons made during his long life as one of the pioneers, in this country, of art out of doors. He, like the elder Olmstead, was influenced by the English School, which has been the inspiration for the design of our great naturalistic parks and many of the finest country estates in America. In these examples of landscape art we find great stretches of lawn and masterful grouping of trees and shrubs, giving the composition the finish of pictures painted by great artists who were taught to observe and to draw carefully.

These men had unconsciously absorbed the principles of a school where formality was so cleverly masked that it seemed to become part of the natural landscape, this, with their knowledge of the requirements and limitations of the vegetable kingdom in landscape design, has given a symmetry and balance to their compositions that has seldom been surpassed.

These scattered examples of landscape art have awakened an interest in better design out of doors throughout the country and even the owner of a small lot of land realizes the need of better advice in planning his grounds than he can obtain from the local nurseryman or horticultural expert, who has the practical, without the artistic knowledge that the home builder requires. It is the hope of the editors that the following illustrations may be of assistance to the men and women who are planning small home grounds, and feel that their problem is too small to call in a landscape architect. They also hope it will awaken a desire for community planning, and the co-operation of several home builders in planning their grounds resulting in more harmonious surroundings for the whole community, and where each individual problem is too small to call in an expert, that their combined needs may warrant the advice of the landscape architect, the lack of whose services is so apparent in many developments planned by promoters who have given little thought to making a community of real homes.

It is also the thought of the editors that landscape architects will find the illustrations useful when studying details for the grounds of small estates they are designing and a convenient volume to use in consultation with clients to illustrate the points they wish to emphasize, as types of the small examples that are usually scattered through several volumes.

It is interesting to follow the art of garden design down through the history of civilization and observe the influences of climatic conditions, and the customs and manners of the people who have developed it to suit their needs.

The formal garden had its beginning centuries ago in Egypt, and we can obtain a fairly accurate idea of the gardens which were built several thousand years ago from the pictorial descriptions that have come down to us. The fame of these gardens spread to the neighboring countries. The Assyrians, the Persians and the Greeks all had their gardens.

The people of Greece were never great gardeners and their designs show the predominance of straight lines and geometrical curves. Although they had a highly developed appreciation of nature, when they brought it into their landscapes it was treated in a most formal manner.

The Romans, who derived their art from the Greeks, introduced more trees and flowers into their garden designs, although they retained the formal lines of the Greeks. The Roman hillsides required the use of terraces which necessitated balustrades and steps. These gardens were often wholly decorative and the trees were clipped to formal shapes and hedges. When, under the Empire, life became more luxurious, the gardens

became larger and more elaborate and more artificial, and the natural elements were replaced by sculpture and architectural ornament.

With the fall of Rome the art of gardening disappeared, with the exception of the cultivation of a few herbs and fruit trees by the monks, who contributed little to the art of gardening.

With the Italian Renaissance the Classic forms of art were revived, gradually growing into a greater freedom, and the villa gardens of Rome and Northern Italy were produced. This finally degenerated into a type of design where exaggeration was the keynote, the architectural forms were heavy and clumsy and the vegetation was cut into grotesque shapes.

But fortunately the art of garden building had crossed the Alps, and Andre le Notre was to design the park at Versailles. There on more level land, with a background of trees, a new style was developed of a breadth and on a scale that had never been equalled in Italy, suitable for the festivities and ceremonies of the French Court. The keynote of his design was to tie his garden to the surrounding landscape, and may be classed as a happy medium between the extremely formal and landscape school. Wherever the fashions of the French Court moved it was natural that this form of gardening should follow. Consequently it was carried to England and its influence is seen in our own early American gardens in a more simple form.

In England it developed into extreme formality, from which there was a strong reaction to the natural style. Many of the best formal gardens, as well as those of extreme and grotesque design were destroyed with the change of style, and much was done in the name of naturalness, that was more artificial than the designs that followed formal lines.

Here in the United States, we are developing a style that is adapted to our climatic conditions and to our modern needs. We are becoming an out-of-door people, parks, country clubs and gardens are becoming a necessity and must be planned to suit the needs of the people they serve.

By studying European examples we can improve the design of our home surroundings. But when we attempt to copy any particular example in its entirety, it is usually incongruous and out of place. It is not good art to copy an Italian, French or English garden, but from all of them we can obtain suggestions and adapt them to our needs. The grounds about a cottage should be as carefully planned as the grounds that surround the more pretentious house.

The earth is the canvas on which the picture is made in living materials of trees and shrubs, and the success of the finished composition depends on its moulding in relation to the house. The English are most proficient in this art and, to the casual glance, the grounds about their houses seem so natural that it is hard to realize that they are the result of careful planning. With them, garden making has become an instinct. The ground is so carefully moulded, the walks and steps are so well placed that they become part of the picture, and the planting, which should always be considered last in making a garden, is so well balanced that the whole design melts into the natural surroundings without a discordant note.

The principal charm of the English garden is its merging into its surroundings, it is never obtrusive, its several units connect in an harmonious whole. The kitchen garden is as attractive as the garden leading from the house terrace. On either side of a bowling green a perennial border backed by well-clipped hedges makes a perfect garden picture; on the other side of the hedges there may be a fruit or vegetable garden, but bordering the walks or at the base of a building, one finds a border of flowers or small shrubs masking the straight lines and to the novice giving the appearance of informality, a word that the amateur so dearly loves, but seldom understands.

The plans of all the best examples of English gardens, when connecting with the house, follow straight lines. True the gardener often does queer things, as in "The Kitchen Garden at The Old Bell House," Plate VI, where he undoubtedly edged the walk with stones that stick up like teeth; he also is responsible for many of the yew and box bushes that have been trimmed to grotesque forms; and he delights in placing horticultural forms in natural surroundings. To me, a tree like the Japanese cut-leaf maple placed on a lawn with a naturalistic background is like a man in a dinner jacket at a tennis match. If you must have plants with multicolored foliage, use them in connection with the garden, never in naturalistic surroundings, or as single specimens on a lawn that would be beautiful if it were not littered with horticultural wonders. As Mrs. Van Rensselaer says in "Art Out of Doors," the weeping willow is a beautiful tree in the right place, but she has

never seen it in the right place. This is true of many of the trees and shrubs with strange forms and red, yellow or variegated foliage, they are beautiful things in themselves, but extremely difficult to combine in a landscape composition. This is also true of the varicolored evergreens, that are so much in vogue for planting about suburban cottages. The English gardener loves everything that is a plant, and he takes special delight in these freaks of nature, which he usually places in conspicuous spots where they are out of tune with all their surroundings. For the person visiting England for the first time, who is interested in horticulture, but untrained in landscape design these novelties have a strong appeal and he is apt to consider them the height of English garden art. And on his return home he hastens to acquire the bluest spruce or the reddest maple that he can find at the local nursery, and to place it in the most conspicuous spot on his lawn, where all his neighbors can see and enjoy his new possession. And like the boy who has started to collect postage stamps, his greatest desire is to acquire more, and anything that is strange, or that a catalogue lists as rare, has the strongest appeal. His interest in plants and the great out-of-doors has made him a strong advocate of the naturalistic school and he proceeds to dot his lawn with these deformed members of the vegetable kingdom until it becomes a forest of wonders and is as unlike a naturalistic English landscape as a piece of red-and-yellow calico is unlike a fine old piece of Spanish brocade. Without realizing it he has produced a composition that is artificial in the extreme. If, as often happens, he is the director of a botanical garden or the commissioner of a city park, his attempt at landscape design is of incalculable harm to the community in which he lives. He should have read some good books on landscape design and studied the compositions of artists like Corot or the elder Innes, that he might have understood the principles that govern all good out-of-door art, and then he would have been able to discriminate between the good and the bad and realize that he needed the advice of a trained man to tell him what to buy and how to use his purchases.

When designing home grounds an appreciation of architecture and some knowledge of engineering are necessary as well as a knowledge of horticulture, and above all the man must have a feeling for landscape composition. The landscape architect should be the first man on the ground, before the house is built, for it is he who can mould the soil to fit the architectural lines of the house, design the road system and adapt the design to the existing trees. His knowledge is broader than the architect's and engineer's and he should be the directing spirit working in collaboration with them. When the landscape architect is called in after the house and roads have been completed he is in the same position as an architect who is asked to design a house to fit a foundation that has already been built. He finds himself either forced to ask his client to spend large sums of money to correct mistakes, or to hide the defects with planting which makes the design bad art from the start. Successful landscape design depends on the ground plan where sufficient study has been given to moulding the soil to meet required conditions and the embellishment of the ground with planting, and often with architectural features. The plan is conceived in the office on paper, but its successful execution depends on intelligent supervision on the ground and its adaption to existing conditions by men who love the work and the great out-of-doors, and whose training has been along artistic as well as practical lines.

Clarence Fowler.

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ENGLISH HOUSE GROUNDS

PLATES

Walter Harper

The Old Bell House, Ludford, Ludlow. This charming old Jacobean house seems to grow naturally out of the ground on a shrub-covered bank, retained by a dry stone wall, making a most excellent place for a wall garden. The building on the right, with the interesting dove-cot, and the queer old tree growing out of the wall on the left make an informal entrance to the walk that leads to the old mill, now used as a studio.

Walter Harper

The Old Bell House, Ludford, Ludlow. This photograph shows the mill at the end of the walk at "The Old Bell House" with the wall garden in full bloom. This charming informal treatment is possible in the United States and gives a maximum amount of spring flowers with a minimum of care. Cerastium tomentosum, dianthus deltoides, campanula carpatica, alyssum saxatile, nepeta mussini and many other plants are seen at their best when planted on a sunny dry wall. Consult a good book on wall gardens.

Walter Harper

A suggestive design for a rose garden at The Old Bell House, Ludford, Ludlow, with its background of English yew hedges. The same effect can be obtained here by using Japanese yew, taxus cuspidata.

Walter Harper

A flight of rough stone steps in a recently planted rock garden at The Old Bell House. The rock garden is a place to grow interesting plants. A suggestive treatment for a ledge on a rocky hillside, much more picturesque than a sun-baked lawn. Use low-growing plants that would form a carpet, like phlox subulata, dianthus deltoides and veronica rupestris.

Walter Harper

The Old Bell House with the River Teme in the foreground, the ledge banks covered with flowering shrubs and small trees.

Walter Harper

The kitchen garden at The Old Bell House. In this photograph we have an interesting example of a utilitarian garden with its small fruits, vegetables and cutting border of flowers. It might have been better to have used brick in place of the rough stone for bordering the beds, but the effect of the whole composition is one of charming domesticity.

The garden at the Glanna estate near Gloucester, between the valleys of the Severn and the Wye. An interesting treatment for a hillside garden, with a broad grass walk and perennial borders. The yews have been trimmed to fantastic shapes. So many different forms are not restful in a garden.

ENGLISH HOUSE GROUNDS, PLATE VIII

The lake at Glanna estate. A good example of natural scenery, which is undoubtedly the result of artful planning.

The waterfall at Glanna estate. A suggestion for the treatment of a brook on a small estate. The planting is restrained, the ground covers give a feeling of space. Too much planting dwarfs the composition.

The terrace at Grayswood Hill, Haslemere, Surrey. An interesting treatment of a slight difference in levels, which should always be taken advantage of in planning the garden in relation to the house. If the planting against the low wall was of dwarf shrubs, the effect might be more pleasing.

In the herbaceous garden at Grayswood Hill. Evergreen trees make a fine background for an herbaceous garden. A garden needs enframement.

Steps in the rock garden at Grayswood Hill. An interesting detail for steps in a more formal setting near a small house.

Frith

On the Hindhead Golf Links, near Haslemere, Surrey. Why cannot we have surroundings like this near our suburban homes?

The South Front at Gwdyr Castle. An interesting design for beds with low hedges. The vines soften the lines of the house, and are much better than shrubs and small trees, even here the vines are becoming too rampant. Planting near the house should be restrained, otherwise it smothers the architecture.

Buxted Rectory, Sussex. An interesting detail for a brick balustrade, with some well-placed formal evergreens, and a garden house of pleasing proportions.

This old box walk at Beckford Hall near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, is about one hundred and twenty yards in length with trees nearly thirty feet high. It is believed to be one of the finest in England and is said to be eight hundred years old.

An opening in one of the old walls at Barham Hall, Suffolk. A suggestion for a simple treatment in a new wall.

Barham Hall, Suffolk. This grass drive bordered by large trees is a suggestive treatment for clearing out undergrowth under large trees. Too much planting often detracts from the composition.

Barham Hall, Suffolk. The introduction of small bodies of water adds to the charm of an informal composition.

New Place, Haslemere, the country home of Sir Algernon and Lady Methuen. The house designed by Mr. Charles Voysey is a charming specimen of his art. It is of white, roughcast stucco with grey-green roof that blends with the background of foliage. The well kept lawn and terrace wall add to the picture; the two pots of plants detract from the composition.

The steps that lead to the small rock garden at New Place.

The small rock garden at New Place designed by Lady Methuen.

The lily pond and rock garden at New Place. A suggested treatment for a rocky hillside. From a watercolor drawing by Walter Tyndale.

A glimpse of the formal garden through the gate at New Place. Vistas like this add to the interest of a garden.

A view of the lawn at Abbey Hill, Winchester, from the terrace. The quaint bird house is a point of interest in the picture. A delightful spot to spend a quiet hour watching the birds on a spring afternoon.

The walk in the long rock garden at New Place, where masses of saxifrage, dianthus, heuchera, campanula, linum and scores of other rock plants make a brilliant picture.

Hindhead Court, Surrey. A view of the house through the trees from the pool in the rock garden. A quiet informal treatment of the grounds that does not intrude too suddenly on the house. A season's growth will soften the lines of the rocks.

Another view of the rock garden at Hindhead Court, separated from the house terrace by a well placed wall.

A well placed herbaceous border at Hindhead Court. A dark background is always effective for flowers growing in bright sunshine. Note the use of tall growing perennials in this border. Spiraea aruncus, bocconia cordata, hardy asters, echinops ritro and other tall perennials should be used for this purpose.

An interesting treatment of slight differences in levels at Hindhead Court. Vines will soften the horizontal lines of the walls.

The water garden at Hindhead Court. The random rectangles of pavement in the walk form a happy transition from the architectural lines of the pool to the rough stone walls that bound the sunken garden. Irregular pavement would have been restless.

The terrace at Sandybed is a happy transition from the house to the lawn and its homely informal planting gives a sense of domesticity that is always pleasing in a garden.

The south front at Sandybed with its well kept gravel paths and its tangled perennial border against the house, separated from the moor by trees and hedges, gives one a feeling of seclusion that is delightful.

A view of the so-called Dutch Garden at Sandybed. This garden, flanked on two sides by the charming red house which has been added to from time to time, its lines softened by vines and large trees, is suggestive for the treatment of the grounds surrounding a house on a small lot. The steps to the terrace might lead from the side walk through the garden to the door in the angle of the house. And its upkeep with formal walks would be less than that of a lawn with a heterogeneous planting of the usual small evergreens and shrubs that is so often seen.

The rose garden at Sandybed, designed on the lines of the famous garden of Certosa di Pavia near Milan, is separated from the gardens by a high hedge. All rose gardens are ragged when not in bloom and like this one should be placed in a secluded spot. A more graceful ornament for the center might be better, but the general plan is interesting.

Jenkyn Place, Bentley, Hampshire, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold A. Sanderson, is a charming old 17th century house surrounded by lawns and gardens. Part of the present house was built in 1627, but most of it is of a much earlier date. Jenkyn Place is mentioned in Doomsday Book. In the garden there is an old well (called Jenkyn ease well), where the pilgrims refreshed themselves on their pilgrimage to Canterbury. In this photograph half hidden in trees and hedges with the long herbaceous border in the foreground we have a picture of domestic landscape architecture at its best.

Jenkyn Place, from the lawn. This plate shows the house in sharp contrast to the preceding plate where architectural lines are softened by well placed planting. The yew hedges are said to antedate the present house by more than a century.

Jenkyn Place, with the roofs of the service wing in the foreground. A delightful place for a homely little kitchen garden.

In the service court at Jenkyn Place. A well planned courtyard with plenty of open spaces for turning. The vines, in pockets of good soil, soften the lines of the house and are much better than plantings of small evergreen forest trees that outgrow their surroundings in a few years. The tracery of the vines in winter without their leaves is far more beautiful to one who loves plants than vulgar blue and yellow evergreens when used in senseless masses.

One of the old wings at Jenkyn Place with fruit trees trained on the wall. A suggestion for fruit in a small garden.

A simple trellis over a walk at Jenkyn Place. Elaborate patterns in trellises and arbors are often unpleasant and obtrusive in a garden.

A long grass walk through the garden at Jenkyn Place. The great bank of lavender which separates the orchard would be impossible north of Washington but in the upper and middle South lavender grows as luxuriously as in England.

This photograph of the walk through the herbaceous border at Paynsfield, Hassocks, might easily be mistaken for a garden in this country. Note that the lawnmower has cut off the plants that lean over on the grass and has made a number of bare spaces.

Courtesy of House and Garden

Lower scene, Hythe, Kent, a cottage that fits the ground and a most interesting garden plan is the result. Oswald P. Milne, Architect.

Courtesy of House and Garden

A little garden at Huntercombe Place, Oxon, where planting softens the formal lines. The hedges and trees form a background that frame the picture. A garden should never compete with the surrounding landscape. Oswald P. Milne, Architect.

A well-screened tennis court at Swaledale, Burgess Hill, delightful from a pictorial standpoint, but too much shadow for a real tennis court.

Drakestone, Stenchcombe, Gloucestershire. Dry walls like these make admirable wall gardens. Oswald P. Milne, Architect.

The south garden at Brook House, Colwall, where the plants have masked the formal lines of the path and give the effect of an informal mass of foliage and bloom.

Brook House from the brook. The simple wooden bridge is in perfect harmony with the informal landscape.

Courtesy of the Architectural Record.

In this Devonshire garden Mr. Mawson is most successful in combining architecture and nature; a garden like this is attractive at all seasons of the year. Thomas H. Mawson, Landscape Architect.

The herbaceous border and gardener's cottage at Ordsall Hall. A plain little house backed by trees which even in the photograph are half hidden by the English mist. The composition would be more restful if the garden houses and hedges were removed from the central grass panel.

Gellibrands, an ell-shaped early Elizabethan cottage, seen from the tennis court. A suggestive informal treatment for the grounds of a suburban house.

Gellibrands from the meadow. The great oak in the foreground enframes the view and gives scale to the picture.

Dartington Hall in Devonshire—An interesting treatment of levels which can often be taken advantage of when planning smaller grounds. A flight of central steps would add to the interest of the composition.

The Court, Broadway, Worcestershire—A good example of a simple door and corner steps, softened by foliage.

Rhomian Towyn, North Wales, another type of house that is well fitted to the ground. The terrace and garden are so closely related to the house plan that they have become living rooms out of doors. Oswald P. Milne, Architect.

Courtesy of The Architectural Record.

The long perennial border at Walmer Place, Kent, the residence of Lady Curzon, makes a pleasing composition with its backing of trees and shrubs; the broad grass strip that separates the walk from the riot of growth in the beds emphasizes the line of the path, but necessitates the use of plants that will not fall over on the grass and be clipped by the lawn-mower. Use iris germanica, aquilegia in var., sedum spectabile and other plants of upright growth, if the edging is grass. Thomas H. Mawson, Landscape Architect.

Nether Swell Manor. An interesting garden shelter and wall detail. E. Guy Dawber, Architect.

Courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons.

The dry wall which separates the terrace garden from the lawn at Brinsop Court is a mass of color in early spring and is a form of gardening that is as successful in this country as in England, if the right sort of plants are used. Cerastium tomentosum, phlox subulata, arabis alpina, aubrietia in var., gypsophila and scores of other plants thrive in a properly built dry wall.—"English Homes," Period I—Vol. I.

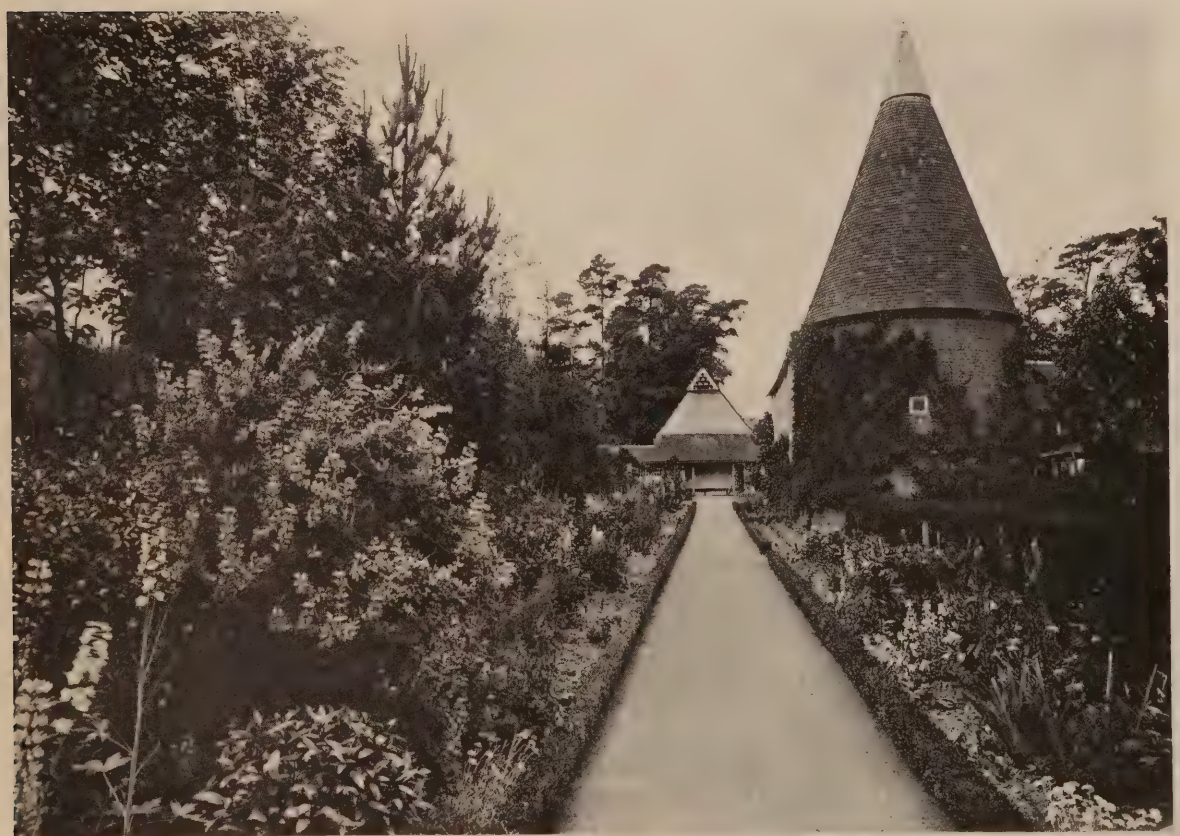
Courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons.

At Brinsop Court the water is so close to the house that it reflects the color of the flowers in the beds on the terrace. A most happy combination of architecture, plants and water.—"English Homes," Period I, Vol. I.

An unusual combination of architecture and water at Mount Melville, St. Andrews, Fife. Paul Waterhouse, Architect.

Proper planting in the foreground will add to the charm of this picture at Mount Melville. Paul Waterhouse, Architect.

A garden house at Mount Melville backed by foliage. Dark backgrounds are usually desirable for enframing a garden. Paul Waterhouse, Architect.



The long border at Stonewall Cottage, Langton, Kent. A good example of a combination of the utilitarian and ornamental. The lines of the path are very definite; a pavement of stone with low growing plants falling on the edges of the walk might soften this. To obtain this effect use nepeta mussini, phlox divaricata, iberis sempervirens, gypsophila paniculata with other plants of graceful habits.

Westwood, Mayfield, Sussex. A fine example of a formal treatment, simple, restful and dignified.

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